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2014 Winter Term Update

Fellow Faculty and Staff:

As we wrap up the 2014 Winter Term and begin preparations to begin a new spring semester, I want to share with you some thoughts on the State budget dynamics, Winter Term, and Internationalization at WKU.

State Budget

In the Governor's Budget Address Tuesday evening, we learned that he is proposing a 2.5 percent cut for higher education, which is \$1.8 million for us. This is primarily to create new funding for K-12 education. This is indeed disappointing, but we also know that the state budget will be finally shaped by the Kentucky General Assembly over the next couple of months. We will track that process closely and do our best to avoid these cuts if possible. The Governor also proposed funding the renovation of Thompson Complex Center Wing (\$48 million) and an increase in the Gatton Academy budget (\$2 million) to allow its enrollment to grow from 120 to 200.

State funding, greater recruitment of Kentucky students, the influx of international students, and our own cost efficiencies will all play an important role in how our campus budget takes shape into FY 2014-15. We will factor the key variables of State cuts (if they hold up), mandated retirement system assessments, fixed cost increases and some form of compensation and/or benefits enhancement into next year's budget model, along with modest new revenue from as little a tuition increase as possible. I shall continue to keep you informed on these important matters as the spring semester unfolds.

Winter Term

Enrollment in this Winter Term is up by 69 students over last year's number with 2,134 students enrolled. They are somewhat evenly divided between face-to-face students on the main campus, online students, and students who are studying abroad. Winter Term has become an important teaching/learning and revenue endeavor for us, and we will continue to offer Winter Term classes in the future. We are, however, studying how to make the campus more receptive to Winter Term enrollments by looking at the calendar for Winter Term, availability of campus housing, and the delivery of necessary campus services prior to and during the Winter Term session. The 89 percent of our students who are not enrolled in Winter Term have been out since December 13th. We are maintaining communication with as many of them as possible to ensure that they all are ready to return next week to continue pursuit of their degree programs.

International Restructuring

In my communications with the campus over the last couple of years, I have spoken often about the Internationalization of the WKU experience. The international reach part of our vision is both important and necessary as we seek to enrich our learning experience and to strengthen our financial profile. The number of students studying abroad this year is up, and we want to continue to make study abroad possible for as many students as possible. Study abroad and global learning, however, can be expensive for our students and has financial cost realities for our university budget. It is, nevertheless, an important dimension of our global learning process. The recruitment of international students, however, brings rich diversity to our student population, and brings important strategic revenues to help support our campus budget, including academic programs for our Kentucky and domestic out-of-state students. This year, our international enrollments are up 43 percent and will grow next year as well.

It is for these reasons that I want to make the campus community aware of some changes to our international structure which are now in place and working quite well. In my August 2013 Faculty and Staff Convocation remarks, I referenced how we were going to refocus our international efforts into “incoming” and “outgoing” structures. Those changes have been made and are depicted on the attached flowchart. These structures are proven to be quite efficient and effective in allowing people to focus on specific responsibilities designed to achieve strategic outcomes. Existing budgets have been redirected to support these new focus areas.

We have defined “inbound” as activities and support services for all incoming international students, and “outbound” as activities and support services for WKU students who leave campus to study abroad. Some of the old structures have been dissolved in order to accommodate the structures you see outlined on the attached chart. Dr. Craig Cobane is continuing his role as the Chief International Officer—Global Learning. He oversees the “outbound” area including Study Abroad and Global Learning (SAGL). The “outbound” structure includes all international academic programming (study abroad and campus international programs for WKU domestic students) and support for students who travel from the campus to international destinations for credit and noncredit purposes. Mr. Raza Tiwana, the Chief International Officer—Global Recruitment, is leading our “inbound” efforts. As part of our Enrollment Management operation, International Enrollment Management (IEM) is responsible for all international undergraduate recruitment, admissions, and international programming and student services. Our intent is to provide a complete experience to all undergraduate international students from being a prospect in their native lands to graduation from WKU. These services are facilitated by the re-named International Student Office (ISO). IEM and ISO are charged with growing our population of full-paying international students and ensuring that they have a quality experience on our campus leading to the completion of a WKU degree.

As with our recruitment and admissions programs, student retention becomes the responsibility of everyone on our campus. A growing international population will require an evolving embracement of students who come from different cultures and are experiencing new and unusual customs when many of them arrive here for the first time. As our international students approach 10 percent or more of our total student population, it is important that we facilitate a positive WKU experience for them while they are with us. Everyone’s efforts in this regard will be appreciated. Let’s all try to remember how we want our WKU students treated when they study on campuses in other countries, and make sure we embrace our international students in like fashion.

Thank You

Thanks for your continuing service and commitment to our students, to our learning process, and to strengthening the value of the degrees which our students continue to earn in record numbers.

Gary A. Ransdell
Attachment
